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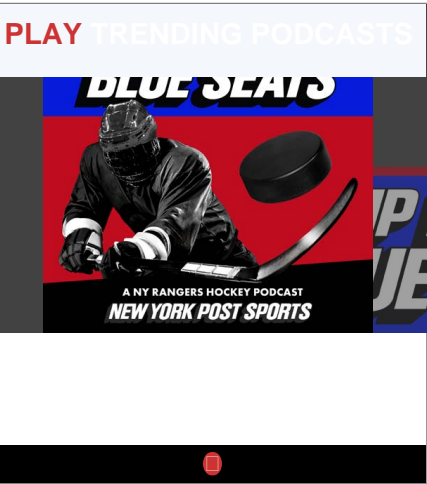


NEWS EXCLUSIVE

Fyre Fest’s Billy McFarland reveals new project from prison, swears it’s no ‘scam’

By Doree Lewak

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Billy McFarland
Patrick McMullan via Getty Image

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Now he’s sending out smoke signals.

Convicted **Fyre Festival fraudster Billy McFarland** exclusively tells The Post he is starting a new endeavor from inside prison: crowd-funding money for other inmates to be able to call their loved ones during these trying times.

“Coronavirus is driving families apart . . . and visits are canceled across every federal prison,” McFarland says. “I’m launching an initiative called Project-315 to bring together and connect in-need inmates and their families who are affected by coronavirus. We’re going to pay for calls for as many incarcerated people across the country as possible.”

Prison, he says, has changed him.

“I see the important things in life . . . way more,” he says via phone from Elkton Federal Correctional Institution in Lisbon, Ohio. “I got lost during Fyre — thinking that I had to make it work at all costs. I realize how immature and wrong that thought process was. I’ve grown up in jail.

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“There’s no question I totally messed up. It really makes me sick.

In October 2018, the 28-year-old New Yorker was sentenced to six years in prison and three years’ probation for wire fraud in relation to his ill-fated April 2017 Bahamas-based music Fyre Festival. He was ordered to pay \$26 million in restitution to his victims, but right now he’s focused on footing the \$3.15 standard cost for a 15-minute prison phone call.

He’ll be collecting donations via his new Project-315.com .

“First, I’d like you to know that I know how badly I messed up,” McFarland writes in a letter posted on the site. “I lied, deceived, and ultimately hurt many people in pursuit of what I thought would be successful business ventures. What I did was absolutely despicable, and the responsibility for the damages caused starts and ends with me.”

Still, he admits to The Post, “It’s totally reasonable that people would think this is a scam. The good thing is, this isn’t for me — it’s for the families of inmates, who are suffering because of what their loved ones did.”

To get the ball rolling, “My friends are contributing off the bat, so we’ll help the first few thousand families and we’ll go from there,” he says. “I have a small business team of four or five people, a mix of tech and entertainment people” — none of whom were involved in the Fyre Festival — helping.

“All the money that’s coming in is going directly to the initiative,” he says. “I’m not on any of the bank accounts or documents and I don’t have access to any of the funds.”

Family members can apply online on behalf of their locked-up loved ones, and McFarland’s team will allocate funds to prisoners’ phone-call accounts on a first-come, first-served basis.

McFarland has managed to convince at least one person he’s gone legit.

“Billy’s been a godsend — he helps so many people,” Elkton inmate Jebriel, 42, tells



Billy McFarland
Patrick McMullan via Getty Image

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The Post. “I’ve never met someone in the business world — I’ve always been a street guy.”

Jebriel was touched last week when McFarland had \$10 added to his account so he could speak to his father last week for the first time in six years. “I wanted to hear his voice, and Billy helped me out.”

McFarland was transferred to Elkton in October, after being thrown in the “SHU” — the solitary confinement unit known as the special housing unit — for three months at upstate New York’s minimum-security Otisville, for sneaking in a USB to work on a forthcoming novel. While he grew up in affluent Short Hills, NJ, McFarland still has to save his pennies for the prison commissary, where foaming hand sanitizer costs \$1.55.

McFarland tells The Post he’s not worried about catching the coronavirus, but he supports the release of prisoners most at risk: “Elderly people who are at the greatest medical risk should definitely be considered for release.”

Meanwhile, he’s already making plans for his own future release — and he hasn’t totally let go of his Fyre Festival dream.

“I want to focus on the theme of Magnises [the credit card company he founded] and Fyre, which was to bring people together and create value through that,” he says.

And **someone call Ja Rule**, because there will always be a bit of the old concert promoter in McFarland. Although he wouldn’t reveal names, he swears one more thing about his charitable new endeavor: “We’ll have artists backing the project.”

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